

# Your car repair protection

**Ever been clobbered with a car repair bill that was much more than you were told it would be by the mechanic?**

This has been illegal in Wisconsin since 1975. Car repair shops must get your authorization for any repair and must offer you as estimate if repairs will cost \$50 or more.

And the law now includes businesses that install or repair accessories—such as stereos and cellular phones. It also covers shops that rebuild parts for consumers.

**Here is what you should know about this law:**

- When bringing in your car, pickup, or licensed motorcycle for repairs, you must be offered a written estimate if the bill will exceed \$50. If you don't want an estimate, the shop must still give you a copy of the repair order describing what repairs will

be done.

- No unauthorized repairs are allowed. But if you drop off your car before the shop opens with a note to repair something—and you don't ask them to call you with an estimate—the shop can charge what it wants.
- When calling for additional authorization, the shop must tell you both the cost for the additional repairs and the new total cost of the complete job. Make sure you leave a telephone number where the shop can reach you.
- The shop must return replaced parts to you if you ask for them **before** repair begins. Warranty parts or parts exchanged for rebuilding need not be returned, but must be made available to you for inspection.
- When work is completed, the shop must provide you

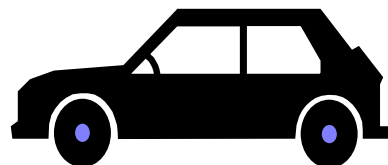
with an invoice describing the repairs, replaced parts (specifying if used or rebuilt), and warranties for repairs and parts.

## Finding the right repair shop

Look for a repair shop before you need one. Ask friends and family to recommend repair shops they trust.

Make sure you ask if the repair work will be under a warranty. Ask about the terms of the warranty. Compare warranty policies when selecting a shop.

And when your car needs repairs, be sure the shop is capable of performing the repairs needed. Look for



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mechanic certification and shop membership in professional associations.

## **Second opinion**

Even though you bring in your car with a specific problem, the shop may recommend additional repairs. If you are uncertain whether or not the work needs to be done, you may want to get a second opinion. With expensive repairs, get a second opinion and an estimate.

## **Can the shop keep your car if you don't pay?**

The shop may hold your vehicle until you pay for authorized repairs. However, once you have paid for authorized repairs, the shop cannot keep your vehicle because you refused to pay for **unauthorized repairs**.

## **Suing for twice the damages**

If the vehicle repair law is violated, consumers may sue for twice the amount of any monetary damages, together with court costs and reasonable attorney's fees.

## **Calling for help**

To learn if complaints have been filed against a repair shop or to report an apparent violation of the law, contact the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection:

**(800) 422-7128**

**FAX: (608) 224-4939**

**TTY: (608) 224-5058**

**E-MAIL:**

**[datcph hotline@datcp.state.wi.us](mailto:datcph hotline@datcp.state.wi.us)**

**WEBSITE:**

**<http://datcp.state.wi.us/>**

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